

ROSEHILL

CEMETERY

ENTRANCE

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION
NOVEMBER 5, 1979

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO HISTORICAL
AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS

ROSEHILL CEMETERY ENTRANCE
5800 Ravenswood Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Date Completed: 1864

Architect: William W. Boyington

Rosehill Cemetery was established in 1859 in Lakeview Township, then a suburb of Chicago. The cemetery is bounded on the East by Ravenswood Avenue, on the West by Western Avenue, on the North by Peterson Avenue, and on the South by Bryn Mawr and Bowmanville Avenues. Built in 1864, the Rosehill Cemetery Administration Building and Gate are designed in a style classified as "castellated Gothic". This architectural idiom is immediately recognizable to Chicagoans from the Old Water Tower of 1869 and, in fact, William W. Boyington was the architect for both these structures. The term "castellated" refers to the use of battlements as a decorative emphasis - a battlement being identified as "a parapet with alternating indentations and raised portions". The battlements, turrets, lancet windows, and the solid masonry construction all place this structure stylistically well within the Victorian Gothic period. Victorian Gothic was an architectural style that revived various forms from medieval English architecture. Castellated Gothic used the forms of medieval castles for picturesque effect, and was whimsical rather than serious.

The Rosehill Cemetery Administration Building and Gate is composed of four contiguous sections. Central is the semi-circular arched entrance surmounted by a triangular arch with a three-story bell tower immediately adjacent to the south. The two-story administration building flanks the bell tower and the gate, housing offices and maintenance facilities. The entire configuration is 200 feet long and 40 feet in width and built of Joliet limestone. Although interior spaces have been remodeled to accommodate changing needs, the exterior has basically been unaltered and so retains all the original character intended by its architect. In 1974 the Rosehill Cemetery Administration Building and Gate was placed on the National Register of Historic Places because:

"Examples of castellated Gothic are rare in the Midwest, and this stone structure by Boyington in being an exceedingly elaborate and well-designed example of that style ranks high among those few that still exist!"

THE ARCHITECT - WILLIAM W. BOYINGTON

William W. Boyington was one of the most prolific architects in the Midwest during the second half of the nineteenth century, and was the premier architect in Chicago during the quarter century before the advent of the Chicago School. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1818, he was trained as an engineer and architect in New York state and for a time practiced there where he was elected a member of the State Legislature and served as chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings. He settled permanently in Chicago in 1853. As a professional, he was principally a commercial architect and was responsible for a variety of public buildings such as schools, churches, hotels, and office buildings.

Among his designs were various buildings for the first University of Chicago located at 34th and Cottage Grove (1859, 1863, 1865), the Sherman House at Clark and Randolph (1869, demolished in 1910), and the Chicago Board of Trade Building at LaSalle and Jackson (1885, demolished in 1928 for construction of the present Holabird and Root building). Boyington died in 1898. Boyington's designs ranged from castellated Gothic to Romanesque to Italianate to Second Empire, and although his work was not innovative, it exemplified the eclecticism of Victorian architecture at its height. Despite his important contribution to the city both before and after the Great Fire of 1871, very little of his work is extant today.

HISTORY OF ROSEHILL CEMETERY

Rosehill is one of the oldest private cemeteries in Chicago. Until the 1850s, the lakefront area now known as Lincoln Park was used as a common burial lot. This eventually proved to be unfeasible as the area's proximity to the lake, which was the source of water supply for the city, resulted in the epidemic spread of water-borne disease. In 1858 concerned citizens whose residences were near the cemetery signed a petition requesting the removal of the graves to another site. Their cause was given additional backing by the medical testimony of Dr. John Rauch and in 1864 the City Council decreed that the graves be moved to private cemeteries.

Rosehill had been created by a special enactment of the Illinois legislature in 1859. Among its incorporators were William B. Ogden, the first mayor of Chicago, and Major John H. Kinzie, whose father had been the first white settler in the city. Rosehill was planned not only as a burial ground, but also as a landscaped park land. The concept that a cemetery could be a place of relaxation for the living as well as a place of repose for the dead developed in Victorian England. As the population of the English cities grew during the early 1800s, graveyards and churchyard cemeteries became abysmally and dangerously overcrowded and the resourceful Victorians recognized the need to provide spacious surroundings in which to care for their deceased. Consequently cemeteries began to be consciously planned as pleasant, open spaces.

The tombstones of Rosehill constitute a compendium of illustrious figures in Chicago history. Public servants such as Buckner S. Morris, Chicago's second mayor, and General Charles G. Dawes, vice president of the United States and ambassador to Great Britain, as well as commercial and cultural leaders such as A. Montgomery Ward, founder of the mail-order department store, and Frederick Stock, Chicago Symphony conductor are buried at Rosehill. Also interred at Rosehill are Myra Bradwell, first woman in the United States to apply for admission to the bar and founder and first editor of Chicago Legal News and Ferdinand W. Peck, who was responsible in 1886 for commissioning Adler and Sullivan to design the Auditorium. Besides individual achievement, inscriptions on Rosehill gravestones reflect Chicago's contribution to every United States military engagement from the Revolution to the present.

Rosehill holds many distinctive examples of funerary art as exemplified by mausoleums and memorial sculpture. Perhaps one of the most distinguished of these is the 1864 Fire Fighters Memorial by Leonard W. Volk, a well-known Chicago sculptor. Situated on a central raised plot, the monument is a thirty foot marble Doric column on a rectangular limestone and marble base. Mounted on the column is a heroic figure of a fireman, which commemorates the 15 firemen buried at the base. Volk used several interesting elements of the fire-fighter's profession as decorative and symbolic elements in this work. The classic figure carries a megaphone, then referred to as a "bugle". A coiled hose circles the drum-shaped base of the column and marble panels on the four-sides of the base depict in relief the hand-pumpers (fire-engines) used then. Splayed out from the base at four points are limestone facsimiles of wooden fire pumps.

Other noteworthy examples include the tombs of George S. Bangs and "Long" John Wentworth. Bangs was the designer of the first railway mail car and his tomb is a small-scale reproduction of the car itself, carved in granite. Wentworth, who died in 1888, designed his own monument, a seventy-two foot granite shaft that, at Wentworth's insistence, bears no identification.

Due to a provision of the original charter of 1859, Rosehill and the monuments contained therein is assured of continual perpetuation. Section 9 of the charter states: "No roads or streets or other thoroughfares shall be laid out through any property selected and held by Rosehill Cemetery Company for burial purposes...nor shall any of the lands so selected and held be condemned for right-of-way by any other corporation for any purpose whatsoever".



